

Birmingham & Black Country Local Sites Assessment Report

EcoRecord Reference	Site Name	Grid Reference	Designation(s)	Survey Date(s)
WA115 (part of) and n/a	The Skip	SP042974	SLINC (part)	20/08/2018
Planning Authority	Site Ownership	Area/Length	Reason for Survey	Report Date
Walsall MBC	Private	2.35 ha	Black Country Call for Sites	20/12/2018

Meets LS Criteria	SLINC	Type	Wildlife	i.e. Wildlife/Geological
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Amendment(s)	New Site	i.e. None; New Site; Upgrade; Downgrade; Extension; Whole/Part Deletion
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Description	The whole survey site is considered to meet the threshold for selection (see Map 1).
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Citation (Summary of Value)

The Skip, located to the east of Daisy Bank, Walsall, comprises 2.35 ha of semi-natural broadleaved woodland, mature hedgerows, tall-herb and a pond. The habitats present support a good diversity of flora and fauna and are potentially utilised by species of note, for example, the mature Ash trees in the remnant hedgerow provide suitable roosting sites for bat species, and the pond is likely to be utilised by breeding amphibians. The Skip is an attractive area of Walsall's remnant countryside and provides good connectivity between urbanised Walsall to the west and open countryside to the east, in addition to being situated in a corridor connecting to the north with Skip Lane (SLINC), The Spinney (SLINC) and Hay Head Quarry (SSSI).

Local Site Selection Criteria

Ecological		
Habitat Diversity	M	The site consists of very dense semi-natural broadleaved woodland dominated with Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>). There is scattered Pedunculate Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) regeneration and tall-herb on the edge of the woodland which is good for breeding birds. Mature Ash trees in the remnant mature hedgerows potentially provide roosting habitat for bat species and connectivity to adjacent sites. The pond in the south of the site is a long-standing habitat and may be of importance to breeding amphibians.
Species Diversity	L-M	In addition to a good variety of species commonly associated with the habitats present on site there are two axiophyte species for Birmingham and the Black Country; Wild Angelica (<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>) and Black Bryony (<i>Dioscorea communis</i>).
Habitat Rarity	M	The habitats present on site are common to frequent in Birmingham and the Black Country.
Species Rarity	L-M	Most of the flora recorded are <i>Very Common</i> to <i>Common</i> in Birmingham and the Black Country, except Greater Spearwort (<i>Ranunculus lingua</i>) which is <i>Uncommon</i> .
Size or Extent	M	In the context of Walsall's Local Sites The Skip is <i>Small</i> to <i>Medium</i> in extent.
Naturalness	M	The semi-natural broadleaved woodland does not appear to have been managed for approximately 10 years, resulting in natural regeneration of Ash through the majority of the site, as well as Pedunculate Oak in the southern area which is predominately tall herb. An old remnant hedgerow on the southern edge of the woodland reflects the historical land use of the site as farmland.
Position & Connectivity	H	The site is situated on the eastern side of Daisy Bank and forms a semi-wooded corridor to the open formal countryside to the east and Skip Lane (SLINC) to the north forming a continuous corridor with Cuckoos Nook and The Dingle.
Geological		
	N/A	Not assessed.
Social		
Historical & Cultural	L-M	The site represents a remnant of the area's countryside and is the site of "The Skip", a former dwelling which was situated in the southeast of the site as depicted on late 19 th century mapping.
Access	M	The site is in private ownership therefore access is somewhat restricted, although the site can be accessed in the southern area of the site off Skip Lane. There are desire lines in the southern area of the site as it is used by local residents for dog walking and as a cut through to the residential estate to the west of the site.
Aesthetic	M	The Skip is an attractive area of Walsall's remnant open countryside, the semi-natural broadleaved woodland screens the residential area to the west of the site, although evidence of anti-social behaviour and littering along the roadside eastern boundary of Skip Lane distracts from the natural feel of the site.
Recorded History	L	The ecological value of the hedgerows has been recorded previously. Although there is limited records available regarding any ecological, geological or cultural features present.

Value for Learning	L-M	Although the site has a public footpath to the south, the majority of the site is in private ownership therefore access could be prohibited for use of the site for learning opportunities.
Site Description		
<p>The Skip is a 2.35 ha site located to the east of Daisy Bank, Walsall. The site is bounded by Skip Lane to the east, open farmland and Cottage Farm to the south, residential houses to the west and Skip Lane (SLINC) to the north.</p> <p>The site would have formed part of Walsall's open countryside, perhaps associated with Cottage or Daisy Farm. The field pattern defined by the remnant hedgerow to the south seems to have changed very little overtime. The site is now predominately covered by semi-broadleaved woodland (approximately 20-30 years old) and tall-herb with defunct hedgerows. The pond in the south of the site appears to be an ancient pond dating to at least 1886 and therefore could possibly be of importance to breeding amphibians.</p> <p>The Skip is in close proximity to Skip Lane (SLINC) and therefore acts as a 'stepping stone' within the wider landscape due to its position within a corridor of designated sites including Hay Head Quarry (SSSI) and The Spinney (SLINC) to the east and Rushall Canal and Walsall Country Park in the north.</p> <p>There is a public footpath along the southern boundary which is used as a cut through by local residents for dog walking, however, access to the site is restricted due to the site being in private ownership and stands of tall-herb particularly at the southern end of the site limiting accessibility.</p>		

Habitats			
Phase 1 Name	Semi-natural broadleaved woodland	Phase 1 Code	A1.1.1
Semi-natural broadleaved woodland covers majority of the site and is comprised of Ash coppiced approximately 10 years ago. Some of the Ash is potentially showing signs of Ash die back disease. The canopy is very dense and as a result the field layer is dominated by shade tolerant species including Ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>), Wood Avens (<i>Geum urbanum</i>) and Lord-and-Ladies (<i>Arum maculatum</i>). The northern area of the woodland comprises of Pedunculate Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>), Ash, Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>) and Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>) with limited light penetration. The field layer consists of Ivy, Herb Robert (<i>Geranium robertianum</i>), and Enchanter's Nightshade (<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>).			
Phase 1 Name	Neutral grassland	Phase 1 Code	B2
There is a small open glade in the northern area of the woodland consisting of remnant grassland flora including Yorkshire Fog (<i>Holcus lanatus</i>) which is dominant, with Red Fescue (<i>Festuca rubra</i>), Creeping Bent (<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>) and Sweet Vernal grass (<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>) also present.			
Phase 1 Name	Tall-herb	Phase 1 Code	C3.1
There are stands of Creeping Thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>), Hogweed (<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>), Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.) Common Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>), False-Oat grass (<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>) and Cock's-foot (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>).			
Phase 1 Name	Defunct Hedge	Phase 1 Code	J22
The eastern boundary comprises of a relatively species-rich but defunct hedgerow along Skip Lane (Skip Lane Hedges SLINC). The hedgerow consists of Pedunculate Oak, Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>), Hawthorn, Elder (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>), Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>), Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>) with a field layer dominated by Ivy. In the southern area of the site there is a remnant hedgerow on a slight bank consisting of Elder, Hawthorn, Sycamore and mature Ash, with Wood Melick (<i>Melica uniflora</i>) and Dog's Mercury (<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>) present within the field-layer.			
Phase 1 Name	Standing Water	Phase 1 Code	G1
A small pond is located in the southern area of the site and is dominated by Branched Bur-reed (<i>Sparganium erectum</i>) and Common Reedmace (<i>Typha latifolia</i>) resulting in the absence of open water. Greater Spearwort (<i>Ranunculus lingua</i>), Soft Rush (<i>Juncus effuses</i>), Hard Rush (<i>Juncus inflexus</i>) and Tufted Hair grass (<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>) are also present.			
Notes			

Habitats of Note [1]						
Phase 1 Name	Phase 1 Code	EHD	BAP	NERC	Rarity	Year Recorded
Defunct Hedge	J22		Y			2018
Notes						

Species of Note [1]**Flora**

Species	Statutory	BAP	NERC	RL	Rarity	Axiophyte	Year Recorded
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	2018
<i>Dioscorea communis</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	2018
<i>Ranunculus lingua</i>					U		2018
<i>Melica uniflora</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	2018
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	2018
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	1988
<i>Stellaria holostea</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	1988

Notes

Fauna

Species	Statutory	BAP	NERC	RL	Concern	Rarity	Year Recorded
<i>Apus apus</i>				Amber		C	1987
<i>Delichon urbicum</i>				Amber		F	1987
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Y	Y		Red		VC	1987

Notes None recorded

Site/Habitat Suitability for Other Species of Note (not recorded during the survey)

Description/Notes	The large mature Ash tree in the remnant hedgerow in the southern area of the site could provide a suitable roosting site for bats, in addition to foraging habitat due to the site's position in a corridor which includes Cuckoos Nook and The Dingle to the north of the site. Bat species including Noctule and Pipistrelle have been recorded in close proximity to the site including the nearby Rushall Canal. The pond on site could provide suitable breeding habitat for amphibians including Great Crested Newt (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>) because of the longevity of the habitat in the site's history.
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Invasive Species [2]

Species	Location	Abundance (DAFOR)	Year Recorded

Notes None recorded

Geology

Solid/Drift Formation	Alveley Member – Mudstone and Sandstone. Carboniferous Period Sedimentary Bedrock.
Description	
Features of Value	
1	None recorded

Soils

The vegetation present would suggest the soil conditions are neutral.

Public Access & Site Usage

Land Use	Private woodland.
Access Level	Restricted.
Access Type(s)	Public footpath along the southern boundary.

Comparison with Previous Survey(s) Results

Previous surveys have focused on the hedgerows (Skip Lane Hedges), which appear to be in similar condition to the present survey.

Boundary (notes)

The site is bounded along the eastern side and partially on the northern side by Skip Lane, a public footpath runs along the southern boundary and there is residential housing along the western side of the site.

Summary of Assessment

When assessed against the Birmingham and Black Country Local Site Selection Criteria, The Skip scores *Medium* against most of the ecological criteria, therefore it is recommended that the site be designated as SLINC.

Recommendations (including further survey & site management/enhancement)

1	Selective woodland management, including coppicing and thinning of selective species, would promote a diversity of structure and maintenance of the open glade with grassland flora which would be beneficial to invertebrates.
2	In order to prevent the loss of the wetland pond habitat, it would be beneficial to monitor and control the extent of Branched Bur-reed and Common Reedmace encroachment within the pond to maintain some open water conditions, in addition to coppicing the Grey Willow to prevent shading of the pond.
3	Hedgerow management including selective coppicing, hedge-laying and re-planting would be beneficial to retain the hedgerow alongside Skip Lane as historic features of the site, and to provide linkage for wildlife to neighbouring fields within the open farmland.
4	Additional protected fauna species surveys including bat, amphibian and badger surveys would be beneficial.

Data Sources

	Source	Date
Species and Habitat Data Source(s)	The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country	2018
Geological Data Source(s)	British Geological Society 1:50,000 bedrock & superficial deposits GIS web map services from BGS website: https://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/services/mash-ups/desktopgis.html	2018
Historic Data Sources(s)	Ordnance Survey Country Series Mapping 1884 – 1992.	2018
Assessment Author and Organisation	The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country	2018

[1] HABITATS/SPECIES OF NOTE TABLES – ATTRIBUTE DEFINITIONS

STATUTORY (PROTECTED) -

EHD = EU Habitats Directive (plus where relevant the Annex II or IV). **PBA** = Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

WCA S1 = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 1 (birds protected at all times). **WCA S5** = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals with various levels of protection). **WCA S8** = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 8 (higher and lower plants with various levels of protection).

BAP – Habitats/Species included on latest UK BAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

NERC P.I. - Habitats/Species included on current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended).

RL - Species included on Global IUCN & British Red Lists (Red Data Books).

RARITY (HABITATS) - BIRMINGHAM & BLACK COUNTRY - Habitats included on the B&BC list of locally rare habitats (administered by EcoRecord).

RARITY (FLORA SPECIES) - BIRMINGHAM & BLACK COUNTRY - (based on data held and managed by EcoRecord).

VR = Very Rare - a species present in less than 1.0% of 1Km squares, tetrads, or 5Km squares in B&BC.

R = Rare - a species present in 1.0% - 4.3% of 1Km squares, tetrads, or 5Km squares in B&BC.

U = Uncommon - a species present in 4.3% - 12% of 1Km squares, tetrads or 5Km squares in B&BC.

AXIOPHYTE - included on the Birmingham & the Black Country list of axiophytes.

CONCERN (FAUNA SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN) -

Birds: **R** = Red List - species that are Globally Threatened according to the International Union for Nature Conservation criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; and those that have declined historically and not shown a substantial recent recovery. **A** = Amber List - species with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe; those whose population or range has declined moderately in recent years; those whose population has declined historically but made a substantial recent recovery; rare breeders; and those with internationally important or localised populations.

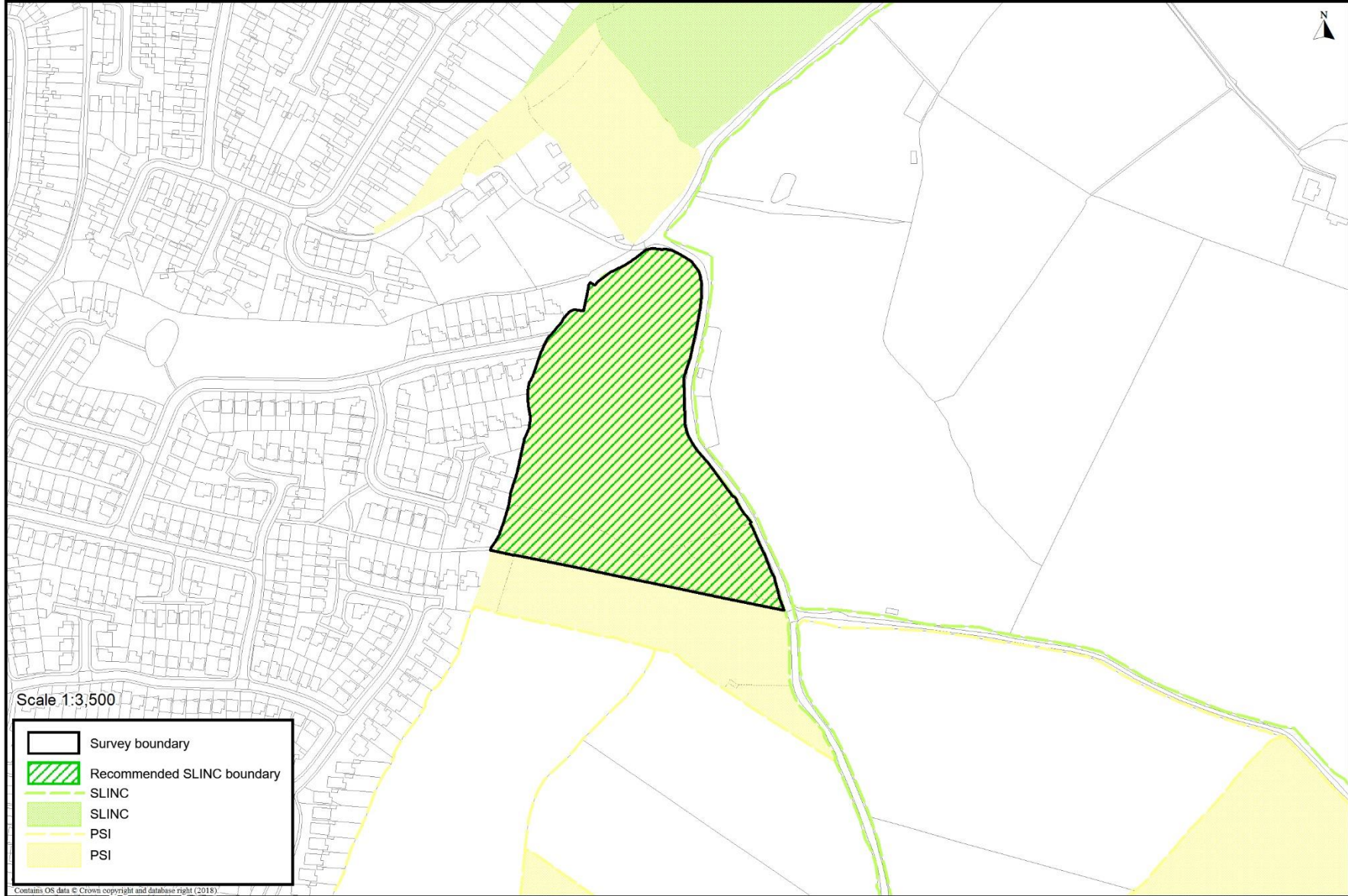
Mammals: **ND** = National Decline and **ED** = England Decline as measured by the Mammal Societies Table of Recent Population Changes in the Native Species of Land Mammals.

Invertebrates: **RD** = Regional Decline identified in Butterfly Conservation West Midlands Regional Action Plan.

YEAR - The most recent year the species has been recorded.

[2] Species listed on Schedule 9 part 1 (animals) and part 2 (plants) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended - this lists animals which may not be released or allowed to escape into the wild and plants which may not be planted or otherwise caused to grow in the wild.

Map 1: The Skip Current & Recommended Designation



Map 2: The Skip Phase 1 Habitat Map



Site Photographs



Dense Ash woodland, August 2018



Open glade dominated by Yorkshire Fog, August 2018



Tall-herb comprising of Hogweed, Creeping Thistle and False-Oat grass, August 2018



Pond dominated with Branched Bur-reed and Common Reedmace, August 2018



Mature Ash in defunct hedgerow, August 2018

Species Records

Flora

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Horse-chestnut
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	Wild Angelica
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Sweet Vernal-grass
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-grass
<i>Carex hirta</i>	Hairy Sedge
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Rosebay Willowherb
<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>	Enchanter's-nightshade
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	Tufted Hair-Grass
<i>Dioscorea communis</i>	Black Bryony
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male-fern
<i>Epilobium montanum</i>	Broad-leaved Willowherb

<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	Field Horsetail
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb-Robert
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood Avens
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog
<i>Holcus mollis</i>	Creeping Soft-grass
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft-rush
<i>Juncus inflexus</i>	Hard Rush
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass
<i>Matricaria discoidea</i>	Pineappleweed
<i>Phleum pratense</i>	Timothy
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Smooth Meadow-grass
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	Knotgrass
<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild Cherry
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak
<i>Ranunculus lingua</i>	Greater Spearwort
<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	Bramble
<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	Raspberry
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	Wood Dock
<i>Salix cinerea</i>	Common Sallow
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common Ragwort
<i>Sparganium erectum</i>	Branched Bur-reed
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Yew
<i>Typha latifolia</i>	Bulrush
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Tufted Vetch